

**One case, four approaches: The application of  
psychotherapeutic approaches in sport psychology.**

TURNER, Martin J., ASPIN, G., DIDYMUS, Faye F, MACK, Rory, OLUSOGA, Peter <<http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8431-3853>>, WOOD, Andrew and BENNETT, R.

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**One case, four approaches: The application of psychotherapeutic approaches in sport psychology.**

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## 1 Abstract

2 Sport and exercise psychology practitioners tasked with service provision within any  
3 environment can decide which framework(s) they draw upon to inform their applied work.  
4 However, the similarities and differences between psychotherapeutic approaches are under  
5 represented in current literature. Therefore, this paper brings together practitioners from four  
6 dominant psychotherapeutic approaches to address one specific hypothetical case. Four  
7 different cognitive behavioral approaches are outlined, namely rational emotive behavior  
8 therapy (REBT), cognitive therapy (CT), schema therapy (ST), and acceptance and  
9 commitment therapy (ACT). Each practitioner outlines their approach and proceeds to  
10 address the case by covering assessment, intervention and evaluation strategies that are  
11 specific to their approach. Similarities and differences across the approaches are discussed  
12 and implications for practice are put forth. Finally, two further practitioners introduce  
13 motivational interviewing (MI) as an additional framework to foster the working alliance.

14 *Keywords:* CBT; applied sport psychology; soccer; counselling; philosophy of  
15 practice

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1 therapeutic training in sport and exercise psychology.

2           With the above aim in mind, this paper brings together four practitioners with  
3 expertise in four dominant psychotherapeutic approaches, namely REBT, CT, ST, and ACT  
4 (CBTs), to address one case. The four approaches were selected because they represent both  
5 second wave (REBT, CT) and third wave (ACT, ST) CBTs, which share some  
6 characteristics, but also fundamentally differ. In addition, REBT, CT, and ACT are  
7 particularly popular in sport psychology professional practice and applied literature, whilst  
8 ST is a relatively novel approach to sport psychology. We wanted to present a paper that  
9 provided details across these CBTs, but also highlighted differences across the approaches. In  
10 additional to the four CBTs, two additional practitioners bring expertise in motivational  
11 interviewing (MI; Miller & Rollnick, 2013), a counselling approach presented as a valuable  
12 adjunct to CBT. The first author assembled the practitioner team by contacting prominent  
13 experts in each of the selected approaches. Once the team was assembled, collectively a case  
14 narrative was developed that reflected a typical case we might work with in sport. The  
15 collective experiences of the team were abstracted out into the case of Jordan, and each  
16 practitioner was tasked with addressing the case using the approach for which they held  
17 significant expertise. So in what follows, the REBT expert authors the REBT section, and CT  
18 expert authors the CT section, and so on. Each CBT practitioner outlines their approach and  
19 proceeds to address the case by covering assessment, intervention and evaluation strategies  
20 specific to their approach. In a final stage, each section was reviewed by a highly experienced  
21 (> 25 years) CBT practitioner (HCPC Registered, British Association of Behavioural and  
22 Cognitive Psychotherapies Accredited), trainer, and supervisor, to ensure the accuracy of  
23 each approach. The coverage of these four approaches marks a shift in effective sport  
24 psychology practice, whilst introducing the reader to different ways of approaching a case. It  
25 is hoped that this paper encourages discussion about therapeutic training in sport and exercise

1 psychology. The approaches are organized in chronological order from when they were  
2 originally conceived in the literature, but first, we introduce the hypothetical case that each  
3 approach will address.

#### 4 **The Case**

5         Jordan is a 25-year-old professional soccer athlete competing in the top domestic  
6 league. Jordan has fully invested in soccer since the age of 17, deciding not to pursue further  
7 education, and focus solely on soccer. Jordan has been playing at the same club since the age  
8 of 9, coming up through the academy system to secure a starting place in the first team. After  
9 a period of underperforming in training and matches, the coach decided not to start Jordan in  
10 the next game, placing Jordan on the bench for the first time in two years. The team played  
11 well, and subsequently, Jordan has remained on the bench for three consecutive games. You  
12 [the practitioner] notice that Jordan has become distant, not displaying the usual vigor you  
13 have observed in the past, and is bickering with teammates more frequently. In a brief  
14 conversation with you yesterday, you open up some informal dialogue with Jordan about the  
15 situation, in which Jordan commented that “I’ve been dropped...it’s made me feel so angry,  
16 and really embarrassed.” Jordan also communicates to you that “the coach thinks I’m not  
17 good enough” and that “it will be downhill from here for sure.” Jordan asks to speak with you  
18 in more detail, and so you arrange a more formal and private one-to-one session.

#### 19                                 **Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT)**

20         The practitioner holds an MSc in applied sport and exercise psychology, a PhD in  
21 sport psychology, is a Health Care Professions Council (HCPC) Registered and British  
22 Psychological Society (BPS) Chartered Sport and Exercise Psychologist, and is also  
23 Accredited with the British Association of Sport and Exercise Sciences (BASES). They have  
24 been working as a sport and exercise psychologist since 2008 and hold an Advanced  
25 Certificate in REBT. Developed by psychotherapist Dr. Albert Ellis in the 1950s (Ellis,

1 1957), REBT is considered to be the first CBT, and is different from other therapies most  
2 notably due to its emphasis on rational (flexible, non-extreme, & logical) and irrational (rigid,  
3 extreme, & illogical) beliefs as the key cognitive mediators between a situation (or inferences  
4 about a situation) and affective and behavioral reactivity (Ellis & Ellis, 2018). To reflect this  
5 cognitive mediation model, a GABCDE framework is used to help clients become aware of  
6 the role rational and irrational beliefs play in how they feel and behave. If clients present with  
7 irrational beliefs (iB) that, in response to situations or events (A), manifest to block or impede  
8 their goals (G) by triggering unhealthy emotions and maladaptive behaviors (C), clients are  
9 encouraged to rigorously dispute (D) and challenge these irrational beliefs. Rational beliefs  
10 (rB) are then encouraged and reinforced to help the client experience healthy emotions and  
11 adaptive behaviors (E).

12         There has been a recent upsurge in literature examining REBT within sport and  
13 exercise settings (e.g., Turner & Bennett, 2018), with irrational beliefs being associated with  
14 psychological distress (Turner, Carrington, & Miller, 2019) and increased burnout (Turner &  
15 Moore, 2016) in athletes. Also, REBT is an effective approach for reducing irrational beliefs  
16 and associated dysfunctional cognition, emotions, and behaviors (see Turner, 2016a). The  
17 extant literature provides general guidance on how REBT can be applied with athletes (e.g.,  
18 Turner, 2019), yet details of how REBT can be applied to specific cases are scarce.

### 19 **Initial Assessment**

20         It is possible for an initial assessment to be brief. Ellis maintained that whilst  
21 historical factors can influence psychological wellbeing, we disturb ourselves in the present.  
22 Therefore, my main aim in an initial conversation with Jordan would be to garner as much  
23 contextual information as possible, with a focus on the present. During this initial  
24 conversation, it would be important for me to show genuine interest and curiosity to  
25 accurately understand Jordan's current thoughts and feelings. I would not challenge myself or

1 the client to explore the presence of rational or irrational beliefs (Bs). I would also avoid  
2 biasing my assessment of Jordan with preconceived notions of irrationality. I would also not  
3 assume that Jordan's responses (C) are disproportionate or inappropriate, and would not rule  
4 out the idea that her emotions could aid goal attainment at this stage.

5       *Assessing C.* In my formal face to face assessment, I would attempt to ascertain  
6 whether Jordan is experiencing Unhealthy Negative Emotions (UNE; dysfunctional, and  
7 maladaptive) or Healthy Negative Emotions (HNE; functional, and adaptive; Ellis, 1994) in  
8 relation to being side-lined by the coach. Through fully exploring Jordan's emotional and  
9 behavioral experiences in relation to A, I can understand whether her emotions are helping or  
10 hindering goal attainment - not all emotions are unhealthy and targets for change (Kashdan &  
11 Biswas-Deiner, 2014). We would talk about her behavioral reactions to A (as we currently  
12 understand it). If my assessment reveals that Jordan is experiencing UNEs, then I will target  
13 the specific UNEs for change. For the purposes of this paper, we could suggest that Jordan is  
14 displaying shame (UNE). In REBT, shame is typically predicated by thinking that one has  
15 acted in a way that falls very short of ones ideal, and that one is being looked down upon.  
16 Shame is evidenced by Jordan's behavior; withdrawal, saving face by attacking other(s), and  
17 defending threatened self-esteem in self-defeating ways (e.g., being excessively defensive  
18 and alienating others as a result; Dryden, 2016).

19       *Assessing A.* I would next help the client to more deeply explore the initial inference  
20 (A) so that we can better understand the specific irrational beliefs at the center of Jordan's  
21 shame. To do this, I would use inference chaining (Ellis, Gordon, Neenan, & Palmer, 1997;  
22 Turner & Bennett, 2018) to go beyond the initial A that Jordan has been "dropped" and find  
23 that it is really the perception that she has let people down, that is bringing forth Jordan's  
24 shame. This more critical A can help us to discover potential irrational beliefs (iB) held more  
25 deeply. An example of Jordan's irrational beliefs might be, "I don't want to, and therefore I

1 must not, let people down, I can't stand it when I do, and doing so makes me a failure.”  
2 Jordan has demands about not letting people down (“I must not”), and frustration intolerance  
3 (“I can't stand it”) and has self-depreciation beliefs (“I am a failure”) about letting people  
4 down. These beliefs have been developed over time and may be triggered in situations where  
5 Jordan thinks that she has underachieved. By going beyond the initial inference (being  
6 dropped), Jordan can realize and verbalize the irrational beliefs held in relation to letting  
7 people down. Using inference chaining, I can help Jordan to see that it might not be the  
8 deselection (inferential A) that has directly caused the shame (C); it is the irrational beliefs  
9 (iB) Jordan has about letting people down (critical A) that has led to such shame. Following  
10 this assessment, I would administer the irrational Performance Beliefs Inventory-2 (iPBI-2;  
11 Turner & Allen, 2018) to psychometrically assess irrational beliefs. This acts as a formal  
12 baseline of irrational beliefs.

### 13 **Intervention**

14 *GABC education.* I consider the intervention work to really begin when I formally  
15 introduce the GABC framework to the client. The early stages of the work with Jordan would  
16 include psycho-education about the GABC framework of REBT (e.g., Turner et al., 2018).  
17 My priority is to help Jordan understand the connection between B and C. I would challenge  
18 Jordan's A-C language such as “being dropped has made me feel so angry, and really  
19 embarrassed,” by asking, “what are you telling yourself about letting people down that is  
20 leading to this embarrassment?” I am positing that the real cause of UNEs at this point in  
21 time are beliefs about what has happened. It is not in the client's long-term interest for me to  
22 challenge the interpretation of events. How can either of us truly know the truth of the  
23 matter? For example, Jordan says “I'd be letting people down.” We don't know whether  
24 Jordan would be letting people down or not, so why spend time making excuses and  
25 pretending that this cannot be the case? An important rule when dealing with A, is to assume

1 that A is true. I am sensitively placing Jordan at the center of her emotional turmoil, so that  
2 an elegant solution can be achieved (Wood, Barker, & Turner, 2017), where Jordan takes  
3 responsibility for emotional reactivity. It would be easy for me to say “of course you  
4 wouldn’t be letting people down, why would you think that?” But that only allows me to help  
5 Jordan *feel* better about this situation; it does not address the cause of the UNEs (i.e., deep-  
6 rooted beliefs) that could cause future turmoil.

7         *Disputation.* Here I would help Jordan to challenge her irrational beliefs. Disputation  
8 is a collaborative and scientific process in which I see the client and practitioner as scientists  
9 in cahoots, testing the validity and utility of the client’s beliefs. Disputation comprises a  
10 variety of arguments, but three main arguments are generally reported in sport literature  
11 (Bennett & Turner, 2018): an *Empirical* argument such as “Are your beliefs about letting  
12 people down consistent with reality?” “Let’s be scientists, what does the data show?”; a  
13 *Logical* argument such as “Does it make sense that letting people down makes you a  
14 complete failure? Does it follow that because you don’t want to let people down, that you  
15 ‘must not’?”; and a *Pragmatic* argument such as “Are your beliefs helpful with future goal  
16 attainment? Is it useful to believe that you are a failure if you let people down?” I would  
17 usually supplement this disputation process with a variety of interactive activities such as the  
18 Big I little i technique (Lazarus, 1977), in which Jordan is encouraged to understand that she  
19 is capable of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ behaviours (little i) but rating her whole self is not possible  
20 because humans are too complex (Big I). I also use case examples from the real world to  
21 demonstrate the fallibility of global self-rating. For example, I reason that all athletes are  
22 capable of success *and* failure, but no athlete can be rated as a ‘complete success’ or  
23 ‘complete failure’. I would aim to help Jordan accept the inherent fallibility of being human,  
24 and understand that self-worth is not conditional or contingent on success or failure.

25         *Rational reinforcement.* In this phase, we replace the irrational beliefs that have been

1 rendered false, illogical, and unhelpful, with rational beliefs. Initially, this is an intellectual  
2 process of understanding which beliefs the client could endorse instead of the irrational  
3 beliefs, but as the work develops and rational beliefs are reinforced, the client can gain  
4 emotional insight and start to experience genuine emotional change in line with their new  
5 rational beliefs. We can compare rational beliefs to the irrational beliefs by asking, “is it more  
6 true, logical, and helpful to believe that letting people down makes you a failure, or is it more  
7 true, logical, and helpful to believe that letting people down shows that you are a fallible  
8 human being?” Rational reinforcement can involve the client practicing their rational beliefs  
9 using self-statements such as the athlete rational resilience credo (ARRC; Turner, 2016b).

10 *Homework.* Homework assignments between sessions can maximize the work being  
11 done with the client, and can be cognitive, emotive, and or behavioral (e.g., Turner & Barker,  
12 2014). The Smarter Thinking 2 App (Turner & Wood, 2018) is a cognitive activity that  
13 captures the GABCDE process digitally. The app helps the client to locate, dispute, and  
14 replace their irrational beliefs and offers a diary function allowing the practitioner to view the  
15 client’s work. This is vital because homework needs to be reviewed as part of each session to  
16 assess client gains and areas for future development.

### 17 **Evaluation**

18 It is possible to take a client through assessment, education, disputation, and rational  
19 reinforcement in one session but this is reliant on the client connecting with the philosophy of  
20 REBT quickly and being open from the start. In my experience it is more typical for the  
21 assessment to take one telephone conversion and one face to face session, the GABC  
22 education to last one session, disputation to take one session (per irrational belief), and  
23 rational reinforcement to be completed in the following session. After the client and I are  
24 satisfied that the irrational beliefs have been addressed, we can then move onto imbedding  
25 the rational beliefs into everyday life, which could take one to two sessions, at the same time

1 constantly reviewing the GABCDE process to ensure comprehension and independent  
2 application. My final session is a wrap-up of what has been covered and an opportunity for  
3 the client to demonstrate REBT on me in a role play in which I will fictitiously adopt an  
4 irrational belief and the consequent UNE. Once I am confident that Jordan can apply REBT  
5 independently and that we have resolved her main issues, following research in the field (e.g.,  
6 Turner & Davis, 2018), I would administer the iPBI to mark post-intervention changes.

### 7 **Conclusion**

8 In this section I have briefly introduced REBT and its main components, and have  
9 detailed some assessment and disputation techniques that could be used with Jordan. I have  
10 also indicated the process and flow of the work, which will depend on the client and the  
11 issue(s) at the heart of the work.

### 12 **Cognitive Therapy (CT)**

13 The practitioner has a PhD in sport and performance psychology, is a BASES  
14 accredited sport and exercise scientist (psychology support), a BASES supervisor and  
15 reviewer, a Science Council chartered scientist, and holds a primary certificate in cognitive  
16 behavioral therapy, training, and stress management. They have worked with athletes,  
17 coaches, support staff, and sports teams since 2008. CT (Beck, 1967) is a structured, short-  
18 term, present-orientated approach that focuses on changing cognition to bring about  
19 subsequent helpful changes in emotions and behaviors (Beck, Rush, Shaw, & Emery, 1979).  
20 To achieve such change, CT incorporates a variety of techniques that assume that negative  
21 thoughts are the result of underlying schemas and dysfunctional beliefs (see e.g., Beck,  
22 2011). Originally developed as a treatment for depression (Rush, Beck, Kovacs, & Hollon,  
23 1977) and stemming from a psychiatric standpoint, aspects of CT have been applied by sport  
24 psychology practitioners. For example, cognitive restructuring has been shown to have  
25 positive effects on athletes' sportsperson-like behavior (Mohr, 2001), emotions (e.g., Haney,

1 2004), and stress appraisals and performance (e.g., Didymus & Fletcher, 2017).

2         While many similarities between CT and other CBTs exist, CT has some  
3 distinguishing features. For example, CT is based on a more complex model than other CBTs  
4 and focusses on stressors, reactions, and beliefs. CT often discusses beliefs in terms of core  
5 beliefs (e.g., those that are deeply held), intermediate beliefs (e.g., relating to attitudes,  
6 expectations), and automatic thoughts. Rather than being a philosophical modality like  
7 REBT, CT is a more concrete approach that focuses on the therapeutic alliance to develop,  
8 amongst other things, unconditional other acceptance (i.e., the understanding that others can  
9 accept us unconditionally). CT also emphasizes collaboration between the practitioner and  
10 the client where active participation from both parties leads to co-discovered solutions and  
11 the client becoming his or her own practitioner. One other distinguishing feature of CT is that  
12 the main change agent is testing the validity of negative automatic thoughts, either via  
13 cognitive restructuring or behavioral experiments. An important part of CT is psycho-  
14 education that is adapted to the individual's level of neuropsychological functioning. During  
15 this education, the practitioner encourages the client to recognize, evaluate, and respond to  
16 dysfunctional thoughts (Beck, 2011), which empowers individuals to take an active role in  
17 managing their presenting issues.

## 18 **Assessment**

19         After introductory discourse and setting of expectations, one of the first questions that  
20 I would ask Jordan is "What brings you here today?" The aim of this first open question is to  
21 encourage Jordan to talk, to begin building rapport, and to instigate the process of cognitive  
22 conceptualization (Beck, 1995). The initial phase of conceptualization takes the form of a  
23 one-to-one assessment session that usually lasts between 90 and 120 minutes. During the  
24 assessment session, I would take notes to facilitate my conceptualization beyond the session  
25 and during future sessions and would ask a series of open questions that adopt a Socratic

1 style (i.e., open but guiding). I would also reflect a developing partnership between Jordan  
2 and I by taking an active role in questioning and listening. Some of the key questions that I  
3 aim to be able to answer by the end of the assessment session include “How did Jordan  
4 develop the presenting problem(s)?” “What are Jordan’s most basic beliefs about self, the  
5 world, and others (e.g., teammates, coaches, family)?” “What are Jordan’s assumptions,  
6 expectations, rules, and attitudes?” and “What automatic thoughts and emotions are helping  
7 to maintain the problem(s)?”

8         The process of cognitive conceptualization lasts for the duration of the intervention  
9 and evolves alongside the therapeutic alliance between me and Jordan. I may use tools such  
10 as a thought adjustment sheet (TAS, see Table 1), which can be used to record negative  
11 automatic thoughts, emotions, and believability, during the initial phase of conceptualization.  
12 The TAS could also form the basis of between-session homework tasks (Beck, 2011; Fehm &  
13 Mrose, 2008) to facilitate transfer of learning to real-life situations. Psychometric tools may  
14 also be appropriate in Jordan’s case to assess target variables (e.g., affect, performance) pre-  
15 and post-intervention. For example, it may be helpful for me to use a measure of affect (e.g.,  
16 the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule; PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) at the  
17 start of the therapeutic relationship to ascertain Jordan’s baseline positive and negative affect.  
18 A measure of subjective performance satisfaction (SPS; see e.g., Didymus & Fletcher, 2017)  
19 may also help Jordan to reflect on performance at baseline.

## 20 **Intervention**

21         The primary aim of a CT intervention for Jordan is to address thoughts and inferences  
22 about self and the coach (e.g., “the coach thinks I’m not good enough”) and future  
23 expectancies (e.g., things being perceived as “downhill from here for sure”) with the goal of  
24 subsequently addressing feelings of anger and embarrassment. This, in turn, would influence  
25 Jordan’s behavior (e.g., bickering with teammates) and help with work towards soccer related

1 goals. The intervention with Jordan starts during the assessment session and would continue  
2 for approximately five sessions (see Beck, 1995, 2011) that would be regularly spaced (e.g.,  
3 once per week) based on Jordan's needs and competitive schedule. Ideally, each session  
4 would last between 60 and 90 minutes (dependent on availability) and could be supplemented  
5 by less frequent booster sessions after the intervention has ended. Each session is structured  
6 with an introduction (e.g., setting of the agenda for the session, discussion of homework tasks  
7 that have been completed since the last session), middle (e.g., discussion of new information  
8 and presenting problems that feed into the cognitive conceptualization), and end (e.g., recap  
9 of discussions, agreement of next homework task). The intervention focuses throughout on  
10 educating Jordan to recognize, evaluate, and respond to dysfunctional thoughts and  
11 underlying beliefs (see Beck, 2011).

12         The mechanism of change during the intervention involves an ongoing focus on the  
13 automatic thoughts that Jordan experiences in response to various soccer-related situations,  
14 associated emotions, and the behaviors that are displayed as a result of the thoughts and  
15 emotions experienced. The physiological component of presenting problems is also explored  
16 to help Jordan understand the links between situations, thoughts, emotions, and the impact of  
17 these on physiological states. To facilitate change, I would ask questions such as "What is an  
18 alternative way of viewing this situation?" once our client has shared some of their automatic  
19 thoughts. I may also ask questions like "What is the worst that could happen and how would  
20 you cope if it did?" and "What influence does believing your automatic thoughts have?"  
21 These questions are designed to apply the main agent of change in CT, which is to test the  
22 validity of negative automatic thoughts. An important part of the intervention is Jordan's  
23 engagement with homework tasks, which would be agreed and reviewed during each session.  
24 Each homework task would be developed with, rather than for, Jordan so the exact nature of  
25 them varies client-to-client. However, some suggestions include working through a TAS

1 section by section to record thoughts and emotions between sessions or creating two lists of  
2 goals: one for the intervention and one for soccer.

### 3 **Ending and Evaluating the Relationship**

4           Jordan is ready to end the intervention when automatic thoughts are consistently more  
5 helpful, belief in the negative automatic thoughts is reduced, emotions are generally  
6 facilitative for soccer performance, and behavior toward teammates and others is more  
7 favorable. To smooth Jordan's transition out of the intervention, sessions would be tapered  
8 from once per week to, for example, once every other week and eventually to three- or four-  
9 week intervals. During this time, we would explore Jordan's automatic thoughts about ending  
10 the intervention to remain aware of potential concerns. The structure and content of the final  
11 session is similar to all previous sessions but includes more of a focus on what Jordan has  
12 learnt during the intervention and this will be implemented independently in the coming  
13 weeks and months. The intervention can be evaluated via verbal feedback from Jordan and  
14 via assessment of learning in view of original goals. Re-using the PANAS and SPS measures  
15 to gather immediate and delayed post-intervention data is also likely to be helpful.

### 16 **Conclusion**

17           To summarize the CT approach to Jordan's case, the emphasis is on the links between  
18 cognition, emotion, and behavior, which are primarily accessed and changed via a focus on  
19 challenging the evidence base of and believability in negative automatic thoughts. A sound  
20 therapeutic alliance is essential for a successful intervention, as is authenticity on both my  
21 and Jordan's parts alongside engagement with homework tasks.

### 22 **Schema Therapy**

23           The practitioner holds a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology and is a HCPC registered  
24 Practitioner Psychologist, and is also Chartered with the BPS. The practitioner has an MSc in  
25 sport and exercise psychology, and have been working as a Clinical Psychologist since 2006.

1 They have been a certified Schema Therapist with the International Society for Schema  
2 Therapy (ISST) since 2015. The goal of Schema Therapy (ST) is to identify and modify  
3 maladaptive thinking, feeling, and behaving. However, ST has a larger emphasis on past  
4 experiences and emotions, and change happens through understanding the development of  
5 schemas. The goals of ST are to identify and reduce maladaptive coping behaviours (which  
6 perpetuate schemas and reduce the likelihood of schema change), whilst developing healthier,  
7 more adaptive alternatives, and healing unhelpful schemas (Masley, Gillanders, Simpson, &  
8 Taylor, 2012; Young et al., 2003). It is more accurate to say that ST reflects an integrated  
9 model of therapy that combines aspects of CBTs, Gestalt experiential therapy, and  
10 psychoanalytic thinking. The aim is for clients to become aware of the schema being  
11 triggered and insert thoughts between emotion and action to take control of their weakened  
12 schemas. In ST, schemas are considered to be extremely stable and enduring themes that  
13 develop during childhood, and are dysfunctional to a significant degree (Young, 1999). These  
14 schemas serve as templates for the processing of later experience, but result from a child's  
15 adaptive attempt to cope with a lack of fit between their needs and the environment they grew  
16 up in (Linehan, 1993). In adulthood, these schemas result in dysfunctional perceptions that  
17 govern the way a person sees themselves, others, and the world. Eighteen individual schemas  
18 have been identified (see Young, Klosko & Weishaar, 2003). Maladaptive schemas are  
19 defined as "extremely stable and enduring themes that develop during childhood, are  
20 elaborated throughout an individual's lifetime, and are dysfunctional to a significant degree.  
21 These schemas serve as templates for the processing of later experience" (Young, 1999, p. 9).  
22 Schemas influence thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, and maladaptive schemas are, for  
23 example, positively related to psychological distress (Calvete, Estévez, López de Arroyabe,  
24 & Ruiz, 2005). Calvete et al. (2005) showed that certain schemas relate to anger and anxiety,  
25 and Hawke and Provencher (2011) and Aspin (2018) found a significant reduction in anxiety

1 symptoms using ST.

2           The lack of literature on the use of ST in sport may be due to ST being a relatively  
3 new and comparatively under researched CBT, and does not necessarily reflect ST's poor fit  
4 into the sporting context. On the contrary, ST and the schemas it proposes are relevant to  
5 athletes (Turner, Aspin, & Gillman, 2019). Given the dearth of ST-related work in sport, this  
6 section represents an important step in introducing how ST could be applied with athletes.

### 7 **Assessment**

8           In the assessment, the aim is to explore schema-related thoughts and feelings, and  
9 their origins. My first question might be “you said to me yesterday that you feel the coach  
10 thinks you are not good enough, can you tell me more about that?” This open-ended question  
11 starts a conversation to identify whether, and which, schemas are present. I am listening to  
12 the way thoughts are described and what feelings are present to match these with my  
13 knowledge of the how the schemas are defined. For example, I have heard Jordan's comments  
14 about not being picked for the team again, and this negative thinking about performance (and  
15 the assumption that improvement is impossible) is indicative of a Failure to Achieve schema.  
16 Asking “does this experience remind you of any time in your past?” starts to explore the  
17 schema's origins and helps Jordan and me to understand where and why Jordan learned to  
18 think and feel this way. Jordan could be experiencing Failure to Achieve and Defectiveness  
19 schemas, which develop from childhood needs for praise and confidence building not being  
20 sufficiently met. This may have left feelings of disappointment or deflation as Jordan does  
21 not have sense of success or competence. It is usual to pick out a few schemas within how  
22 clients talk during the first meeting and I would also ask Jordan to complete the Young  
23 Schema Questionnaire (Young, 2005), often between the first and second sessions. When  
24 reviewing the questionnaire we would identify two or three schemas to address.

25           Next is an imagery exercise where Jordan describes a recent time when the schema

1 was triggered, such as being told to stay on the bench. Once strong emotions are present the  
2 client is asked to wipe that image from their mind, keeping the feelings, and picture a time, as  
3 young as possible, when they felt the same. Imagery is used to explore the origins of the  
4 schemas because placing oneself in our mind's eye into a past situation helps us to remember  
5 the details of the thoughts and, particularly, emotions. This is important to gather more  
6 information to understand the schema but particularly for the client to get an emotional sense  
7 of the origin of the schema. This helps the client to challenge the schema driven thoughts  
8 through the realization that the schema's origins are in a past, rather than the present moment.

### 9 **Intervention**

10       The intervention aims to weaken the influence of the schema. Imagery for change  
11 rescripts past experiences to have a healthier experience that meets the child's needs,  
12 allowing healthier attitudes such as confidence and competence. The client recounts the  
13 childhood event with closed eyes and the psychologist asks guiding questions, such as  
14 "where are you, what can you see, who is there, what are they saying, what is the expression  
15 on their face?" Re-scripting starts when events in the image do not meet the child's legitimate  
16 needs (that all children have a right to be met), where the client usually becomes upset  
17 (sometimes tearful) and or their body language changes markedly, and or when there is a  
18 logical sense in the room that this is not right for the child. The psychologist is directive in  
19 telling the client how to imagine the situation so that their needs are met. As clients get to  
20 know their needs, they can become more active in re-scripting. Imagery is not to pretend that  
21 difficult events did not happen, rather, changing other people's responses in line with what  
22 the child needed. This gives a different emotional understanding; that the schema is not the  
23 objective truth but a creation due to experiences of needs not being met. This helps to  
24 distance the client from their schemas.

25       Another technique to challenge schemas is to use an empty chair to represent

1 schemas. The client can discuss with each schema what “it” wants, what “it” thinks, why “it”  
2 is there and what “its” purpose is. This is an abstract concept that even young clients can  
3 grasp quickly. A chair is identified to represent the schema being worked on, and another  
4 chair to represent the healthy and functional part of the client. Clients move between chairs  
5 speaking from either the schema or healthy part of themselves and hold this conversation  
6 until the healthy part feels it has won the ‘argument’. The dialogue could go as follows:

7 *Jordan, being the Failure to Achieve schema:* “you will never be a good enough  
8 soccer player, you will never be chosen again”.

9 (Moves chairs) *Jordan, as the healthy part of the self:* “that’s a horrible thing to say,  
10 why would you say that?”

11 (Moves back) *Failure to achieve chair:* “because if you think you are going to be  
12 successful you will be very disappointed, I am trying to protect you from that pain”.

13 *Healthy chair:* “but you are stopping me from even having chance as your negativity  
14 stops me being able to put in the effort I need to get picked each week”.

15 *Failure to Achieve:* “but that negativity is your realization that you’ll never be any  
16 better and means you will be prepared for the inevitable”.

17 *Healthy part:* “but you are holding me back [gets angry], you are stopping me, you  
18 are making me despondent, you are making me play worse, I’m not having it any  
19 more, I will not listen to you anymore!”

20 This feeling that Jordan gets of triumph and powerfulness at having won over the  
21 schema is the aim of chair work; the belief and self-confidence that the client can fight the  
22 schema and win. There is realism as the psychologist and client are not pretending that  
23 Jordan will be the best athlete, just that the client has given their all and is not held back by  
24 the schemas. The client is also encouraged to identify and question the schemas outside of the  
25 sessions by using a monitoring sheet to record the trigger, emotions, thoughts, behaviors, and

1 identify the schema. This helps them to understand how schemas operate and can be  
2 challenged in daily life, and can be backed up by keeping lists of evidence to the contrary of  
3 the schema in order to build confidence that they can overcome the schema-related thinking.

#### 4 **Evaluation**

5         The work ends when the client feels they have some control over the schemas,  
6 although they may not be symptom free. This is evident when the client feels confident in  
7 their use of self-talk to challenge the schema and win, and in using some or all of the above  
8 techniques to continue progressing without the psychologist. The number of sessions is  
9 dependent on the difficulties the client brings but between 10 and 20 sessions is often  
10 sufficient to bring about lasting change. Finishing therapy is typically an anxiety provoking  
11 time and a follow-up session a few weeks later can be offered to trouble shoot issues before  
12 ending. If the therapy has been lengthy or an outcome measure is sought for auditing/research  
13 the YSQ can be re-administered but this is not standard practice.

#### 14 **Conclusion**

15         ST is about helping clients to change deeply held beliefs by accessing and changing  
16 the emotions felt in childhood when the schemas formed. Imagery and chair work are used to  
17 develop more healthy views and emotions and to encourage doubt that the schemas are  
18 factual. For some, however, issues are related to other people, and ST is an individual-based  
19 therapy with limited scope for a formal understanding of how a person's schemas may impact  
20 those around them. However, ST is an effective way for empowering people to challenge  
21 their inner voices that hold them back and allowing them to fulfil their potential.

#### 22 **Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)**

23         The practitioner has an MSc in sport and exercise psychology and PhD in sport and  
24 performance psychology. They gained Chartered Psychologist status with the BPS in 2010,  
25 and they have 10 years' experience working as a sport psychologist with athletes and coaches.

1 They have extensive ACT training including BPS approved ACT training with Mindfulness  
2 Training Ltd. Practitioners adopting CBTs such as REBT and CT seek to challenge 'negative'  
3 or unhelpful thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations that athletes might feel hinder their  
4 performance. Athletes are helped to develop strategies to remove and/or replace these internal  
5 experiences with more 'positive' or useful ones. In contrast, ACT posits that applying  
6 problem-solving strategies to those internal experiences (e.g., striving to reduce anxiety) is  
7 actually a root cause of psychological suffering . Therefore, rather than trying to help athletes  
8 rid themselves of these unwanted experiences in pursuit of what might be considered an  
9 'ideal' performance state (i.e., optimal anxiety, high in confidence, relaxed, in flow, etc.),  
10 ACT approaches seek to change the relationship an individual has with internal experiences.

11 ACT uses "acceptance and mindfulness processes and commitment and behavioral  
12 activation processes to produce psychological flexibility" (Hayes, Strosahl, & Wilson, 2012,  
13 p. 97). ACT contends that six core processes underpin psychological flexibility (i.e., the  
14 ability to stay in contact with present moment experiences and, depending on the situation,  
15 persist or change behavior in pursuit of values). These processes are: flexible attention to the  
16 present moment, values, committed action, self-as-context, cognitive defusion, and  
17 acceptance (see Hayes et al., 2012). Deficits in any of these core processes can result in  
18 psychological rigidity (i.e., an inability to adapt to changing life circumstances), the root  
19 cause of suffering. The key to psychological flexibility, therefore, is an open, centered, and  
20 engaged response style, where individuals can accept and make room for unpleasant mental  
21 activity, pay conscious attention to the present moment, and stay connected to chosen values  
22 through daily life actions. Growing research indicates that Mindfulness-Acceptance-  
23 Commitment (MAC; Gardner & Moore, 2004, 2006) approaches are related to improvements  
24 in mindfulness, flow, performance, and lower competitive anxiety (e.g., Noetel, Ciarrochi,  
25 Van Zanden, & Lonsdale, 2018). It should be noted, however, that while initial findings are

1 encouraging, further research with more clearly defined intervention protocols and more  
2 carefully selected control groups is needed to increase confidence in the efficacy of MAC-  
3 based interventions. Indeed, in a recent systematic review (Noetel et al., 2018) it was  
4 indicated that many studies found positive effects for acceptance interventions, but that there  
5 was limited internal validity across studies. Therefore, the extant research exploring ACT  
6 prohibits strong causal claims about the benefits of ACT in athletes, and clearly, researchers  
7 should undertake more research in this area, addressing the limits of past work.

### 8 **Assessment**

9         The first stage of assessing the client in ACT is understanding how *they* see their issue  
10 at this particular time, so we might start by asking Jordan, “can you tell me a little about what  
11 you're struggling with at the moment?” Jordan mentions anger and embarrassment at being  
12 cut, and indicates experiencing unhelpful thoughts about the future (“it will be downhill from  
13 here for sure”) and what the coach thinks (“coach thinks I’m not good enough”), so let us  
14 assume that the conversation is steered towards those unhelpful thoughts, sensations, and  
15 emotions.

16         To reformulate the issue in ACT terms, we focus on the six core ACT processes and  
17 try to establish the unique version of psychological inflexibility Jordan is experiencing  
18 (Luoma, Hayes, & Walser, 2017). There is no right or wrong place to start in ACT case  
19 formulation, but since Jordan began by discussing embarrassment and anger, we might start  
20 by establishing the thoughts and feelings that Jordan is avoiding or fused with (i.e., thoughts  
21 that Jordan believes are literally true and that guide behavior in an unhelpful way). Fusion  
22 with thoughts can present as clients' ongoing and fixed evaluations of themselves, so Jordan's  
23 current experience (anger/embarrassment) seems fused with the future-oriented “downhill”  
24 outcome (despite the potentially infinite number of other possible outcomes of the current  
25 reality, i.e., being on the bench for three games).

1           During case formulation in ACT, it is important to focus on the function of Jordan's  
2 presenting behaviors, emotions, and thoughts, rather than their form. For example, Jordan  
3 bickering with teammates might serve the function of displaying passion for the team (a  
4 valued action), but is perhaps more likely to be a way of avoiding unwanted feelings  
5 (experiential avoidance) of inferiority. As such, we might seek further information about the  
6 thoughts and behaviors Jordan seems to be avoiding (“what do you mean when you say  
7 you're embarrassed?”, “do these issues show up in your bodily sensations at all?”), and their  
8 specific function (“where does that thought take you?” , “does bickering help you or harm  
9 you?”).

10           We would then explore other core processes that might be contributing to  
11 inflexibility. For example, Jordan dwells on past performances and has mentioned worry  
12 about the future(inflexible attention). Jordan has come through the system to secure a starting  
13 role and seems very much attached to that 'version' of the self (attachment to conceptualized  
14 self). Given Jordan's history, pursuing soccer at the expense of education and being with this  
15 club for 16 years, it seems prudent to explore current values (potential lack of contact with  
16 values). Finally, Jordan seems to be displaying impulsive, self-defeating behavior (i.e.,  
17 avoiding feelings of inferiority/criticism by not putting in effort), action that is moving  
18 Jordan further away from valued living (inaction, impulsivity, avoidant persistence). Hayes et  
19 al. (2012), provide a number of useful tools such as assessment anchors (a numerical method  
20 of tracking the six psychological flexibility processes), the psy-flex planning tool (a visual  
21 and easy to interpret case formulation tool), and the ACT Advisor (a quick client assessment  
22 tool) to facilitate case formulation and intervention planning. Once the main issues are  
23 established in ACT terms, we might also consider factors that can limit motivation for change  
24 (e.g., lack of understanding about the cost of avoidance), and any strengths that could help  
25 build psychological flexibility (e.g., experiences of mindfulness, openness, acceptance, or

1 committed action that can serve as powerful metaphors to be used in consultancy).

## 2 **Intervention**

3         There are two main goals with initial ACT consultations. First, exploring Jordan's  
4 current and previous attempts to 'solve' the problem, with the aim of highlighting the ultimate  
5 ineffectiveness of trying to control, reduce, or eliminate unwanted thoughts, feelings, and  
6 sensations. We should discuss explicit coping strategies that Jordan has tried, but also less  
7 conscious behaviors (“what typically happens when you start to notice these feelings of  
8 embarrassment?”) to demonstrate that these behaviors (bickering, lack of effort) have a  
9 purpose (i.e., reduction or control of unwanted experiences). In effect, we're already in the  
10 intervention stage here. Second, we should explore Jordan's *willingness* to try an approach  
11 other than control. We start this process by examining the workability of Jordan's attempts to  
12 manage the issue through two routes: 1) by establishing whether attempts to solve the  
13 problem worked out how Jordan thought they would (“has becoming distant actually reduced  
14 anger and embarrassment?”), and 2) by asking what attempts to manage the issue have cost in  
15 terms of living in pursuit of values (e.g., “what would you be doing with your time if you  
16 weren't busy trying to manage your anger/embarrassment/thoughts about what your coaches  
17 think about you?”). As an ACT practitioner, it is important to make sure that what is  
18 happening here is a genuine, non-judgmental examination of whether strategies have worked  
19 in a client's life. Jordan might well think that strategies have worked in the short-term (and  
20 they might have), but the fact that Jordan is here seeking help (“and yet here we are”), is an  
21 indication of the long-term unworkability of control. Any number of *creative hopelessness*  
22 (dysfunctional state of mind that one is unable to see a meaningful future for oneself)  
23 exercises might be used to highlight this such as the Chinese fingertrap metaphor (the harder  
24 you struggle to get out, the tighter it becomes around your fingers), and the Tug-of-War  
25 metaphor (let go of the rope instead of struggling (see Strosahl, Hayes, Wilson, & Gifford,

1 2004, for explanations of these and many other exercises). Only then can we explore  
2 willingness to try something different, such as unhooking (creating distance between  
3 thoughts and feelings, and actions), or the two scales metaphor (to encourage acceptance),  
4 and subsequently work on relevant core processes.

5         It has been suggested that traditional Psychological Skills Training (PST)  
6 interventions are incompatible with ACT (Gardner & Moore, 2006). However, I would argue  
7 that elements of goal setting are important in working towards committed action, and that  
8 forms of imagery are often used in mindfulness exercises. It is important, however, to note  
9 that any efforts to undermine 'faulty' or maladaptive cognitions, or to emphasize reducing  
10 unwanted thoughts or sensations, are at odds with ACT and can ultimately be confusing for  
11 clients (Luoma et al., 2017).

12         There is no "right" place to start applied work, but in this case, exploring values might  
13 be important given the disconnect between Jordan's apparent values (sporting achievement,  
14 teamwork) and behavior (withdrawing, lack of effort). Other relevant intervention goals  
15 might include exposure to experiences of self-as-context (i.e., taking a perspective from  
16 which challenging experiences can be observed) to unhook the client from a conceptualized  
17 view of themselves (e.g., take your mind for a walk, leaves on a stream) and promoting contact  
18 with the present moment to help with acceptance of 'unpleasant' emotions (e.g., mindfulness,  
19 'just noticing' exercises).

## 20 **Evaluation**

21         While some clients may immediately grasp the idea that their control strategies are  
22 ultimately unworkable, others may take a lot longer to reach the stage where we can begin  
23 working on developing psychological flexibility. As such, it is extremely difficult to indicate  
24 how long an ACT intervention might take. Typically though, somewhere between 6-10  
25 sessions provides the opportunity to work on relevant ACT processes in way that might move

1 the client forwards. Evaluation in ACT is ongoing, and constant re-evaluation of treatment  
2 goals occurs throughout consultancy (Hayes, Strosahl, Luoma, Smith, & Wilson, 2004).  
3 Psychometric tools such as the Acceptance and Action Questionnaire-II (AAQ-II: Bond et  
4 al., 2011) could be used to evaluate experiential avoidance, and several of the case-  
5 formulation tools described above can also function as ongoing assessment tools. However,  
6 when the client is engaging in committed action based on chosen values and is demonstrating  
7 the open, centered, and engaged response style discussed at the start of this section, we can  
8 consider bringing the consultancy to a close.

### 9 **Conclusion**

10 The therapeutic relationship itself is at the heart of the ACT intervention. It is  
11 accepting and focused on values, with the therapist modelling and reinforcing the  
12 psychological flexibility being taught. While a detailed discussion about the therapeutic  
13 relationship in ACT is beyond the scope of this article, Hayes et al. (2012) provide a useful  
14 chapter that examines the powerful nature and challenges of this relationship in ACT.

### 15 **General Conclusion**

16 The preceding sections covering four prominent CBTs have offered a brief portrayal  
17 of each approach that allows the reader to compare and contrast (see Table 2, or consult  
18 Dryden, 2012, for a comprehensive comparison). Clearly, within the scope of a short paper  
19 such as the present one, it is not possible, nor was it our aim, to communicate the full  
20 complexity and nuances of each approach. The main aims of the paper were to address the  
21 case of Jordan using four dominant psychotherapeutic approaches, with a view to  
22 encouraging some discussion about therapeutic training in sport and exercise psychology.  
23 However, one must acknowledge that our selection of four CBTs causes some discriminative  
24 problems, because we omit many CBTs in favour of REBT, CT, ACT, and ST. Our intention  
25 in the current paper is not to provide a comprehensive discussion about all possible CBTs, as

1 more detailed and expansive information can be found elsewhere (e.g., Dryden, 2012). But  
2 we have biasedly leant towards CBT approaches that we as practitioners are very familiar  
3 with and have sufficient expertise within. With the case of Jordan, it is possible that none of  
4 the CBTs we cover in this paper is best for the resolution of the case. We do not intend to be  
5 prescriptive here and do not suggest that with a case like Jordan's one can only use one of the  
6 four CBTs we present. On the contrary, we hope to illustrate that a case can be approached in  
7 many ways and that practitioners could aim to develop a broad therapeutic skillset that  
8 includes a range of approaches. The reader will no doubt gravitate to one or more, or none, of  
9 the outlined approaches and it is hoped that if not already trained in the approach/es they will  
10 seek formal training in one of the CBTs presented here, or one of the many other CBTs. In  
11 sport psychology, there are many examples of interventions that take valuable and effective  
12 techniques from a variety of psychotherapeutic approaches (e.g., The Canon) that can help  
13 athletes to achieve their potential. However, with this paper we hope that practitioners will  
14 decide to supplement their knowledge by formally training in a CBT to strengthen the work  
15 they do and to add additional procedural reliability to their work. The CBTs covered in this  
16 paper offer a vast array of well-tested and validated procedures that can be applied with  
17 athletes to aid wellbeing and performance. Whilst we advocate training in psychotherapies, it  
18 is also important to be cognizant of ethical and professional boundaries within which sport  
19 and exercise psychologists must practice. Indeed, whilst a sport and exercise psychologist's  
20 knowledge and use of psychotherapies could have important implications for athlete mental  
21 health, "this is not to say that sport psychologists should 'treat' athletes for mental illness;  
22 this is ethically beyond many practitioners' professional competencies and occupational  
23 remit" (Turner, 2016a).

24         Clearly, practitioners' philosophies of practice have bearing on the approach they take  
25 to any case, the approaches they train in, which of course, can influence their philosophy of

1 practice. There are some fundamental differences in the philosophical underpinnings across  
2 some of the approaches included in the current paper, not least because we include a range of  
3 second and third wave CBTs. Whilst REBT and CT sit squarely within CBT, ST represents  
4 an integration of CBT, Gestalt experiential therapy, and psychoanalytic principles. ACT  
5 diverges from REBT, CT, and ST markedly because it directly challenges the cognitive  
6 restructuring problem-solving strategies that are at the core of REBT, CT, and ST. Rather  
7 than asking “can we think and feel differently” its asks “can we accept and make room for  
8 unpleasant psychological states?” REBT and CT are often conflated and confused with each  
9 other, in part because of the closeness of their conception in time and because they share  
10 some common assumptions about the role of cognitions in psychological wellbeing.  
11 However, REBT and CT are epistemologically different since REBT is a philosophically  
12 based therapy and CT is an empirically based therapy (Padesky & Beck, 2003). As such, CT  
13 boasts far more efficacy studies than REBT and has been more rigorously tested. In practice,  
14 REBT is concerned with the rationality of core beliefs, whilst CT is more concerned with the  
15 functionality of beliefs. Whilst CT encourages guided discovery in identifying and testing  
16 one’s beliefs, REBT emphasizes the direct disputation of beliefs using a structured method.  
17 There are comprehensive resources that readers can access that offer a deeper analysis of the  
18 differences between CBTs (e.g., Dryden, 2012). Of course, there are also some similarities  
19 across the approaches included in the present paper. All emphasize collaboration between the  
20 practitioner and the client where active participation from both parties leads to the client  
21 becoming his or her own practitioner. There is also an emphasis on conducting client  
22 assessments in a collaborative and Socratic manner with a view to developing a strong  
23 therapeutic alliance.

24         The authors of the current paper are not dogmatic about any of the approaches  
25 covered in this paper. Practitioners may choose to adopt person-centered therapeutic (PCT)

1 and or psychodynamic therapeutic (PDT) approaches to their work. The prominence of CBTs  
2 has been driven in part by the greater corpus of available evidence, and by guidelines  
3 proposed by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE, 2005) concentrating on  
4 CBTs (Stiles, Barkham, Mellor-Clark, & Connell, 2008). There is relatively less research  
5 evidence for PCT and PDT approaches compared to CBTs but the efficacy and effectiveness  
6 of PCT has been systematically examined (e.g., Ward et al., 2000). Evidence suggests little  
7 difference in effectiveness across CBT, PCT, and PDT approaches on a range of presenting  
8 issues (Stiles et al., 2008), or across different CBTs (Stefan, Cristea, Szentagotai-Tatar, &  
9 David, 2019). However, the comparative efficacy and effectiveness of each approach on  
10 athlete outcomes remains under-researched and is a justified direction for future research. A  
11 useful overview of CBT, PCT, and PDT as applied to sport is offered by Watson, Hilliard,  
12 and Way (2017), who echo the call made by various experienced consultants (e.g.,  
13 Poczwardowski & Sherman, 2011; Sharp, Hodge, & Danish, 2014) for practitioners to  
14 operate within a theoretical perspective.

15         Also, each of the CBTs in this paper chart distinct assessment, intervention, and  
16 evaluative processes to support Jordan's case. In addition, each approach points to the  
17 significance of collaboration (e.g., CT & REBT), therapeutic alliance (e.g., ACT) and  
18 intervention commitment (e.g., ST) for effective practice with Jordan. Previous research has  
19 noted instances of clients in clinical settings failing to engage with psychological therapies  
20 (e.g., Moloney & Kelly, 2004), and illustrates athletes who are introduced to cognitive  
21 behavioral strategies but fail to practice or apply them consistently (e.g., Brown, 2011; Mack,  
22 Breckon, O'Halloran, & Butt, 2018). One possible explanation for this is a lack of athlete  
23 readiness for the content of the intervention (Massey, Gnacinski, & Meyer, 2015).  
24 Irrespective of content, practice style or experience, the practitioner's ability to form a close  
25 and collaborative therapeutic relationship with the client will largely dictate whether or not

1 the psychological support is deemed to be effective (Cropley, Hanton, Miles, & Niven,  
2 2010). The correlation between the strength of the therapeutic relationship and successful  
3 outcomes is one of the most robust findings within counselling psychology (Watson, Hilliard,  
4 & Way, 2018). The importance of this alliance has been understood in counselling  
5 psychology at least since the conception of person-centred counselling (e.g., Rogers, 1957),  
6 and the delineation of the features of a strong working alliance (agreement on goals;  
7 assignment of tasks; development of bonds; Bordin, 1979). Links can clearly be made to the  
8 sport psychologist-athlete relationship, and yet in sport psychology, there is scant guidance  
9 on how to actually cultivate these relational bonds (Mack, Breckon, Butt & Maynard, 2017).  
10 This is perhaps because of an emphasis placed on the Canon and other outcome-orientated  
11 therapeutic tools and techniques, over the relational, person-centred aspects of the alliance.  
12 Clinical and counselling psychology literature, on the other hand, may offer such information  
13 (Watson et al., 2018).

14         Across all CBT approaches covered in the current paper, there is a focus on  
15 strengthening the practitioner-client working alliance and readying the client for the work.  
16 One approach which practitioners could consider integrating with their use of CBTs in sport  
17 is MI (Miller & Rollnick, 2013), to actively increase athlete readiness for action-orientated  
18 therapy, and enhance the practitioner-athlete relationship. For the present paper, two  
19 additional practitioners with expertise in MI were consulted to provide a brief of MI. One  
20 practitioner has an MSc in sport & exercise psychology and is completing a PhD in sport  
21 psychology, and has been practising MI in sport and exercise settings since 2012, and became  
22 an MI trainer affiliated to the Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers (MINT) in  
23 2015. The other practitioner has an MSc in sport & exercise psychology, a PhD in sport  
24 psychology, and has completed the Stage Two Qualification in Sport and Exercise  
25 Psychology with the BPS. They have been working as a sport psychology consultant since

1 2013 and hold a Primary Practicum Certification in REBT.

## 2 **MI**

3 Originally conceived as an adjunct treatment of addiction, MI is a client-centred and  
4 evidence based psychotherapy that strengthens the client's intrinsic motivation for change,  
5 through the exploration and resolution of ambivalence (Miller & Rollnick, 2002). Central to  
6 MI is the development of a therapeutic alliance, that is, the relationship between the client  
7 and therapist (Copeland, McNamara, Kelson, & Simpson, 2015). Whilst garnering an  
8 autonomy-supportive relationship with the client (Miller & Rollnick, 2013), MI practitioners  
9 adopt a collaborative and empathetic communication style to maximize the working-alliance.  
10 The four core principles on which MI is founded include: 1) a relational component (spirit)  
11 that seeks to develop a collaborative partnership between the practitioner and client. MI  
12 advocates that the practitioner attempts to demonstrate accurate empathy (accurate  
13 understanding of athletes' thoughts and feelings) and compassion (desire to alleviate athlete  
14 distress), and views the athlete as knowledgeable and resourceful, and an active agent in their  
15 progress. 2) This spirit is brought to life via the use of specific communication skills known  
16 as OARS (Open-ended questions, Affirmations, Reflections, and Summaries). 3) The four +  
17 processes (engage, evoke, focus, plan, maintain) offers a structure to a single session, or for  
18 ongoing support. 4) MI is sensitive to the language clients use regarding behaviour change,  
19 and aims to selectively elicit and reinforce 'change talk' while reducing 'sustain talk' and  
20 resistance to change. MI is distinct in that practitioners aim to help their clients to become a  
21 more committed advocate and intrinsically motivated for their own change, rather than  
22 assuming the role of the advocate for change themselves (Kertes, Westra, Angus, & Marcus,  
23 2011). This intrinsic shift towards the intervention process is significant considering much  
24 one-to-one support requires honest introspection, inter-session tasks, and diligence from the  
25 client (Norcross, Karpiak, & Lister, 2005). In sum, the counselling approach of MI offers an

1 integrative framework to actively increase athlete readiness for action-orientated therapy,  
2 enhance the practitioner-athlete relationship, and complement the previously presented  
3 psychological approaches. For further details on these core components and the development  
4 of a working alliance using MI in sport psychology see Mack et al. (2017).

### 5 **Conclusion**

6 The current paper applies four difference psychotherapeutic approaches to the  
7 hypothetical case of Jordan to briefly portray the main characteristics of REBT, CT, ST, and  
8 ACT, when applied to the same presenting issues. We hope this paper encourages  
9 practitioners and researchers to examine each approach more rigorously in sport and exercise  
10 settings. It is also hoped that practitioners will report their utilization of psychotherapeutic  
11 approaches within sport and exercise settings to deepen and widen the knowledge base.

### 12 **References**

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1 *Table 1.* Exemplar TAS based on Jordan’s case (adapted with permission from Didymus & Fletcher, 2017).

1. Situation	2. Automatic Thoughts	3. Emotions	4. Alternative Thoughts	5. Alternative Emotions
<b>Describe the situation clearly and concisely.</b>	<b>What thoughts do you have about the situation? Rate the believability of these thoughts from 0% to 100%</b>	<b>What are you feeling? Rate the intensity of these emotions from 0% to 100%</b>	<b>What more functional thoughts could you have about this situation? Rate the believability of these thoughts 0% to 100%</b>	<b>How might you feel after having the alternative thought? Rate the intensity of these emotions from 0% to 100%</b>
Underperformance in training and competition, which presents as missed passes, lack of accuracy when shooting, and unhelpful muscle tension.	“I’m useless at football these days” (80%) “What’s the point in trying any more” (50%) “I’ll never make the starting line up if I continue to play like this” (70%)	Irritated (80%) Annoyed (80%) Upset (80%)	“This is just a phase and my effort will pay off in the end” (80%) “I will keep trying” (100%)	Determined (90%) Apprehensive (80%) Irritated (30%)
Being dropped from the starting line-up for three consecutive games.	“The coach thinks I’m not good enough” (100%) “It will be downhill from here for sure” (100%) “I will not play well even if I do make the starting team” (80%) “I bet they’re laughing behind my back” (60%) “I have nothing to fall back on if football doesn’t work out” (90%)	Angry (80%) Embarrassed (90%) Anxious (60%)	“It’s worth trying” (100%) “I can play well” (80%) “I can have an impact on the game even if I start from the bench” (80%)	Excited (80%) Nervous (60%) Angry (30%)

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1 *Table 2.* Comparison of CBTs for the case of Jordan (concept adapted from Matweychuk, DiGiuseppe, & Gulyayeva, 2019). This table is not a  
 2 practice guide, but rather, it portrays the core elements of the hypothetical work done with Jordan.  
 3

Characteristics	REBT	CT	ACT	ST
Chief aims	Address core beliefs about the self to address the UNE of shame.	Address thoughts and inferences about self and the coach, and future expectancies, to address anger and embarrassment.	Change client's relationship with internal experiences to reduce experiential avoidance and produce psychological flexibility.	Identify and reduce deeply held maladaptive schemas of 'failure to achieve' and 'defectiveness' and develop more adaptive alternatives.
Cognitive mediation	Irrational and rational core beliefs determine emotional and behavioral reactivity.	Core and intermediate beliefs, and automatic thoughts, determine emotional and behavioral reactivity.	Psychological rigidity is the root of suffering, and psychological flexibility is the root of wellbeing.	Maladaptive schemas underpin view of self and world, leading to psychological distress.
Assessment	GABCDE conceptualization, development of working alliance, inference chaining, psychometrics.	Cognitive conceptualization, development of working alliance, the TAS, and psychometrics.	Case formulation, focus on the six core ACT processes, establish existence of psychological inflexibility, focus on function rather than form, psychometrics.	Explore existence and origins of schema-related thoughts and feelings, psychometrics, imagery.
Cognitive restructuring	Disputation of core beliefs is a core strategy, including empirical, logical, and pragmatic challenges.	Disputation of thoughts is a core strategy, primarily relying on empirical challenges.	Sceptical of disputation and avoids it. Efforts to undermine maladaptive cognitions are at odds with ACT.	Schemas empirically challenged, fought, controlled, and distanced. Veracity of schema is weakened.
Prominent treatment techniques	Psycho-education, strengthening the B-C connection, interactive activities, ARRC, homework tasks (Smarter Thinking App), role play.	Ongoing focus on functionality and veracity of automatic thoughts, psycho-education, homework tasks.	Acceptance and mindfulness processes, commitment and behavioral activation processes, diffusion, creative hopelessness exercises, self-as-context.	Imagery rescription, empty chair, homework tasks.

4